

Army Corps limiting small lock use at Chittenden Locks in Ballard

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SEATTLE – Vessel operators should be prepared to transit through the large lock at the Chittenden Locks in Ballard this summer because of mechanical problems with the small lock, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District,

The pintle bearings that support the four gates of the small lock are deteriorating at a rapid rate. To reduce wear on the pintle bearings, the Corps is reducing use of the small lock. This modified operation is intended to reduce the likelihood of complete failure of the gates.

"The soonest we can have new pintle bearings fabricated is October," said Locks project manager Marian Valentine. "The potential for further damage to the gates is increased if we continue to average 240 lockings per week."

The small lock will continue to be used for emergency vessels, and for other commercial vessels at the discretion of the lockmaster. The locks are still being operated "on demand" 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Most trips through the locks will experience little, or no, impact.

"Although the large lock will see more lockages and does use more water, we are able to do this modified operation due to the abundant snowpack and late snowmelt," said Valentine. "If water shortage becomes an issue later in the summer, the small locks may return to more frequent operation."

We will maximize the use of the large lock by having recreational vessels follow commercial vessels into the chamber. Vessels should allow for potential delays. Kayaks and canoes may not use the large lock. Kayak or canoe traffic through the locks will be seriously impacted. We regret any inconvenience that may occur.

All vessels should carry two lines at least 50 feet in length in order to tie up to the wall of the large lock during all tides.

More information on the lake's status is available on the Corps' Seattle District river basin website at
<http://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/nws/hh/basins/lkwash.html>

General information about the Chittenden Locks is also available on-line at:

<http://www.nws.usace.army.mil/PublicMenu/Menu.cfm?sitename=lwsc&pagename=mainpage>